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911
A Primer for Planners

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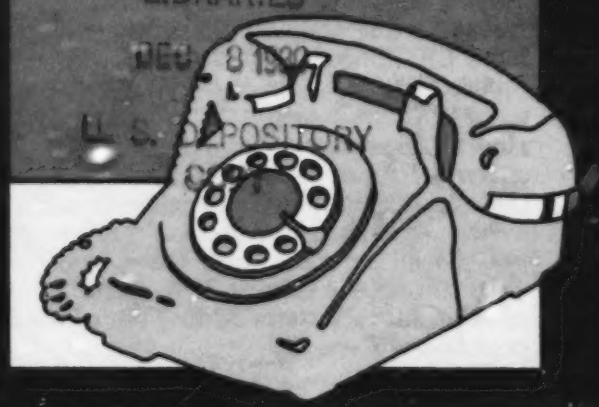

Is your community ready for 9-1-1, the universal emergency telephone number? This primer is designed to set forth some considerations for planning 911.

WHAT IS 911? 911 provides citizens of a community access to all public safety functions by dialing a single three digit number.

HISTORY OF 911 In 1937, Great Britain developed a 999 system. Belgium Denmark, and Sweden followed thereafter. In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement proposed a common emergency number for this country. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company then offered the three digits 9-1-1 as an emergency telephone number for public safety agencies in 1968.

By the end of 1968, nine 911 systems were in operation; 44 systems were established in 1969; an average of 71 per year were established from 1970 to 1974; the number grew to just over 90 installations per year in 1975 and 1976; and by 1980, over 800 systems were in operation.

911 has been adopted by communities of varying size, ranging from Hebron, Nebraska (population 2,000), to New York City (population of almost 8,000,000).

How close are we to nationwide coverage? As of early 1979, only 26% of this nation's estimated 218 million people lived in communities providing 911 service. Of all the states, only Hawaii provides this service to over 75% of its population. In 7 states 50 to 74% of the population is served.

Between 25 and 49% of the populations in fourteen states have access to 911. The remaining 28 states have less than 25% coverage of their population.

BENEFITS OF 911 The need for a rapid response is obvious in such emergencies as crimes in progress, medical situations, fires, suicide attempts, bomb threats, earthquakes, damaged utilities, and floods. The speed and ease with which aid can be summoned through the use of 911: reduces anxiety and fear; avoids further physical, emotional, and mental stress among victims; helps the public in general to feel more secure; and, saves lives.

In a non-911 community, a caller seeking emergency assistance is faced with several choices:—dial the operator and ask for help;—dial posted emergency numbers;—or look up the correct 7-digit number in a telephone directory before dialing. The alternatives usually consume more time than the dialing of the easily-remembered three digits 911, and can have serious implications in an emergency, to-wit:

—The telephone operator may not be familiar with the community, jurisdictional boundaries, street names, or public safety agencies where the emergency has occurred.

—Where large numbers of routine calls are being handled by telephone operators, access in an emergency may be delayed.

—Research shows that most residents, as well as travelers, in a community do not know in which public safety jurisdiction they are located.

—Often, the large arrays of seven-digit public safety numbers listed in a directory can require a time-consuming study with no real assurance that the correct number will be selected.

—And, placing emergency calls from a telephone booth can be particularly complicated (balancing a directory, finding correct change, and dialing a 7-digit number in an agitated state of mind can be a real challenge).

PLANNING FOR 911 SERVICE The factors to be considered include:

(1) the geographical area served;

(2) the public safety agencies to be involved;

(3) the number and locations of public safety answering points (PSAP's);

(4) the boundaries of telephone company central office areas and jurisdictional areas to be served, and how and to what degree they correspond; and

(5) determination of the future use of 911.

Based on these factors, a number of specific determinations must be made, such as:

— types of PSAP facilities, equipment, personnel, and other assets needed;

— the levels of service that are to be designed into the system for incoming calls;

— the telephone facilities and operational capabilities that are available, par-

ticularly in signaling, data retrieval, switching, and trunking; and

— the policies, procedures, and protocols that will be observed to ensure that each emergency call is routed quickly to the appropriate agency.

SELECTING A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 911 SERVICE Interagency relationships, jurisdictional policies and boundaries, population distribution, and geographical characteristics are the major variables involved in selecting an effective management plan.

Two basic management forms are commonly used to operate a multiagency 911 service -- a joint powers agreement, and a contract management agreement.

A joint powers agreement is an intergovernmental agreement which creates a separate authority to perform a specific function. All signees of a joint powers agreement have a representative on a policy board created by the document. The board is responsible for all 911 operations. The joint powers agreement has proven particularly valuable in defusing politically sensitive situations.

Contract management of 911 is the simplest plan. Basically, an existing agency agrees to provide services for other agencies. The provider agency is responsible for 911 answering, and bills users' agencies according to prearranged criteria.

Contracts are most feasible in areas where either there is one acknowledged primary agency that has the resources to operate a 911 service, or where major agencies in the area agree that a particular agency should operate 911.

NEW 911 TECHNOLOGY Various technological advances are emerging to help local public safety agencies provide effective responses to emergency calls from the public. The new features are Selective Routing (SR), Automatic Number Identification (ANI), and Automatic Location Identification (ALI).

Selective routing automatically sends 911 calls to predetermined answering points, based on the location of the calling telephone.

Automatic Number Identification provides the call answerer with a display of the telephone number of the calling telephone.

Automatic Location Identification (available only when a 911 system has ANI) displays the address of the 911 caller on the call answerer's console.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS By late 1980, the Bureau of Justice Statistics will have the following 911 documents available:

(1) a directory of 911 systems;

(2) a 30-minute audio-visual presentation on 911;

(3) an assessment of the advanced 911 systems operating in Alameda County, California, and Chicago, Illinois;

(4) a 911 system design and costing manual;

(5) a guideline manual on 911 public education;

(6) a guideline manual on 911 staff training; and

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(7) an assessment of 911 service functions and facilities.

Additionally, other documents useful to 911 planners (available through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service [NCJRS]) include:

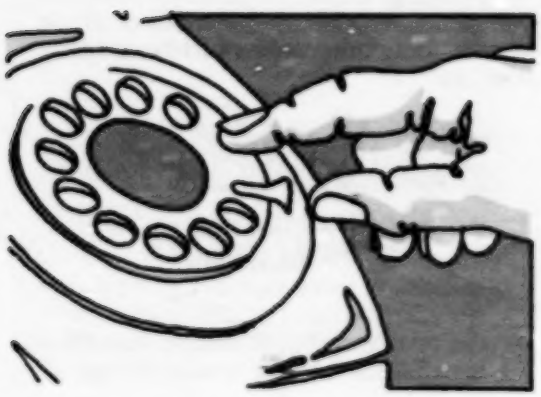
(1) a federal review of "An Evaluation of the Mandated Statewide Emergency Telephone (911) Program by the Legislative Analyst, State of California";

(2) the Regional Communications Manual; and

(3) the Contract Law Enforcement program.

CONTACT If more information is wanted on 911, telephone or write the Bureau of Justice Statistics-sponsored:

911 Clearinghouse for Law Enforcement
Post Office Box 2355
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103
Telephone: (215) 299-2595



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